

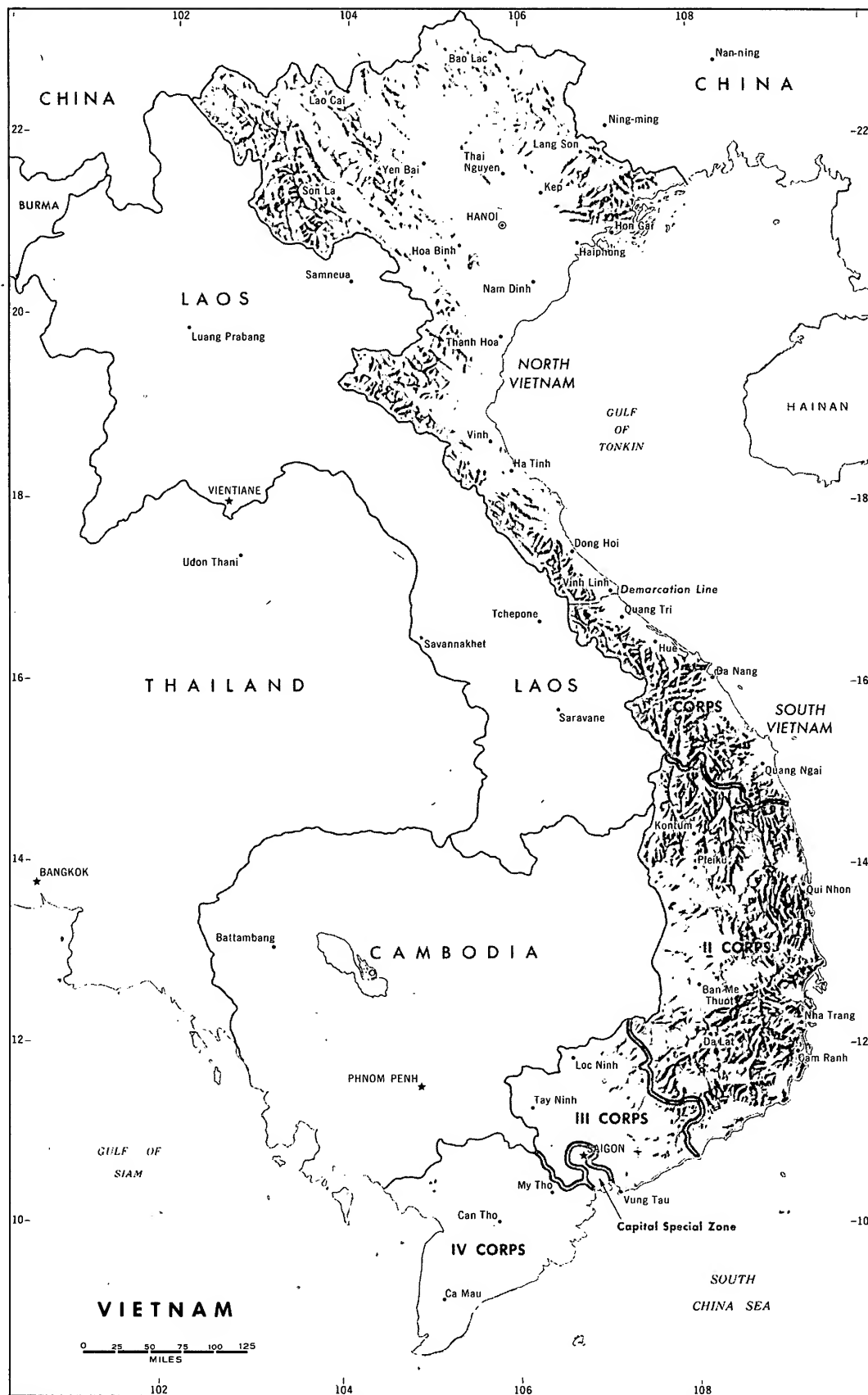
The President's Daily Brief

18 March 1969

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

The tempo of the Communists' offensive eased considerably throughout much of South Vietnam today. Some sharp fighting continued in III Corps northeast of Saigon. Most signs point to another wave of attacks during the period 19-24 March.

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MIDDLE EAST

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The ban on Jewish emigration from the USSR to Israel, which was imposed at the time of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, has been lifted. According to the Dutch, who are custodians of Israeli interests in the USSR, the number

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LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
18 MARCH 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

The Communists fired seven rockets into Da Nang city early today, Saigon time. There were 27 military and civilian casualties.

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MIDDLE EAST

Israeli jets are reported to have made another strike today against Arab guerrilla posts in northwestern Jordan. An Israeli military spokesman, making no reference to an air strike, said Israeli forces fired across the Jordan River in response to shelling by mortars. (Reuters; FBIS, 19 Mar 69)

EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA

Today's issue of the Soviet army newspaper Red Star alleges that another border incident occurred yesterday. The Chinese opened fire, according to the newspaper, and "our troops gave a worthy reply." There is no mention of casualties. (UPI Moscow, 19 Mar 69)

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permitted to leave has risen substantially, and emigrants are not limited to hardship cases but include all ages and professions.

Moscow probably hopes that, by permitting increased but limited emigration, it can reduce Israeli hostility to the Soviet role in the Middle East without arousing the Arab states; probably for this reason it has not publicized the new policy.

EUROPE

There is an increasing expectancy in Portugal that the new US administration will bring about an improvement in relations. This feeling is based on an interpretation of the November elections as a repudiation of previous US policy toward the underdeveloped and nonaligned areas and a renewed emphasis on Europe. Also involved is the Portuguese belief that its African policy is correct, will be successful and deserves the support of all Western powers.

Ambassador Bennett points out that Lisbon now expects positive US actions to support its African policy. Even if these hopes are unrealistic, a failure to achieve them will bring disillusionment and anti-US reaction on the part of an introverted and self-righteous government.

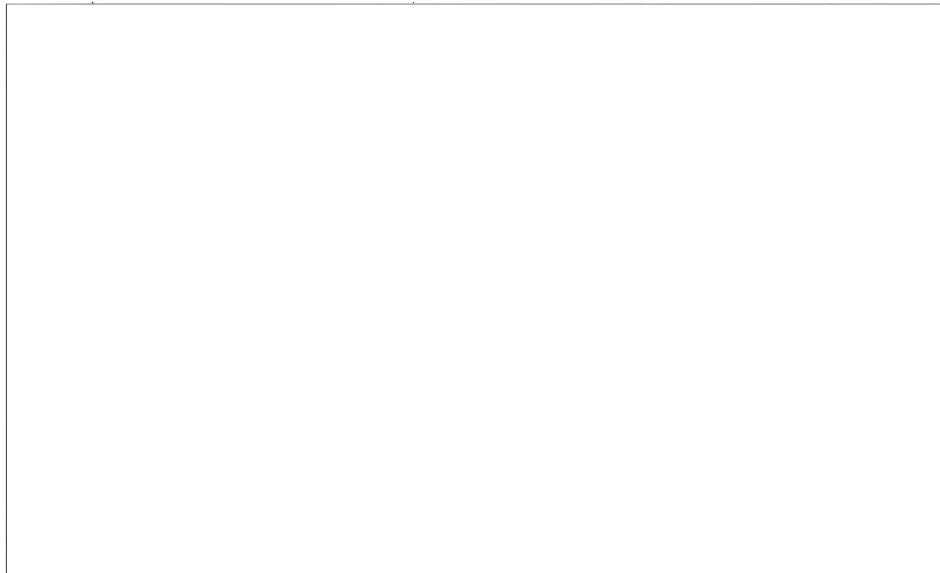
Foreign Minister Nogueira, who considers himself a personal friend of President Nixon, is a leading proponent of the view that the US will come around to the support of

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Portuguese overseas positions. Nogueira wants to remain after the April NATO meeting for a discussion of Portuguese-US relations.

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

PAKISTAN

Violence is spreading in rural areas of East Pakistan, but the city of Dacca itself is relatively quiet for the moment. The consulate general, in fact, has noted some signs that the city's populace is growing weary of continued chaos. It is too early to tell whether these feelings are strong enough to give the government something to build on; in any case, rumors that the army is preparing to impose martial law are continuing to make the rounds. Army officers are talking openly of contingency planning for such a move, and substantial numbers of troops have been moved from West to East Pakistan.

The army probably would try to take charge if it became convinced that all alternatives had been exhausted. Pakistani army men have a healthy respect for the problem of trying to control an aroused East Pakistani population by force alone, however, and they are not likely to rush in precipitately.

LAOS

Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma has scaled down Meo leader Vang Pao's plan for a major offensive in northeastern Laos, noted in the 10 March Daily Brief. Souvanna's decision to withdraw his earlier endorsement was based on a realistic appraisal of available forces rather than on political considerations. Any government offensive,

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therefore, will apparently be confined to harassment and guerrilla warfare. No attempt will be made to seize and hold enemy territory.

The Communists meanwhile have not pressed their advantage in the northeast following the fall of Na Khang over two weeks ago.

SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA

We have been examining Moscow's handling of the Sino-Soviet border clashes, especially the high level of diplomatic and propaganda attention given to the subject since 7 March. We believe the best explanation for this unusual effort is simply the seriousness of the clashes, the desire to fix responsibility on Peking, and the fear that if they continue the Soviets will be forced to respond more forcefully.

In our examination we considered several hypotheses which have been advanced to explain the Soviet response to these incidents--that the publicity given the first clash was to take attention away from the West German election in Berlin, to gain support for the world Communist Conference in May, to whip up a vigilance campaign against dissenters and liberals, to establish the claim that the Chinese were at fault so that the record would be straight if it became necessary to retaliate in strength. No single one of these hypotheses seems completely satisfactory, however.

We think, on balance, that the Soviets are not trying to build up a case for large-scale military retaliation.

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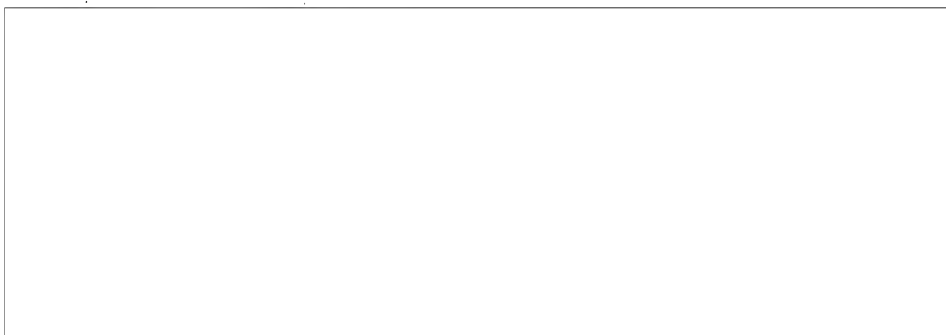
Such a move would keep alive an issue which they have traditionally tried to play down, and they could not be certain what sort of a response it would elicit. Faced with ideological fragmentation in both East and Western Europe, girding for disarmament negotiations with the West and faced with a resource allocation problem at home, it is improbable that they desire an inflamed border with as large and hostile an adversary as China.

This does not mean, however, that they will adopt a timid attitude. If the Chinese feel strongly about a Soviet presence on the island, further encounters are likely. The question now is whether either side will try to take and hold other disputed points along the border and thus risk a spread of the clashes.

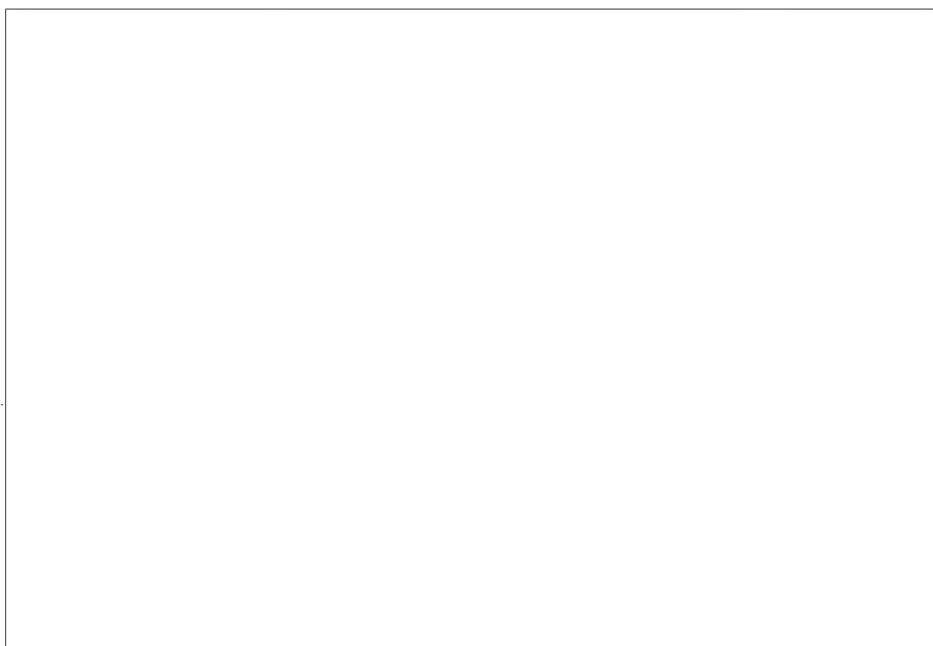
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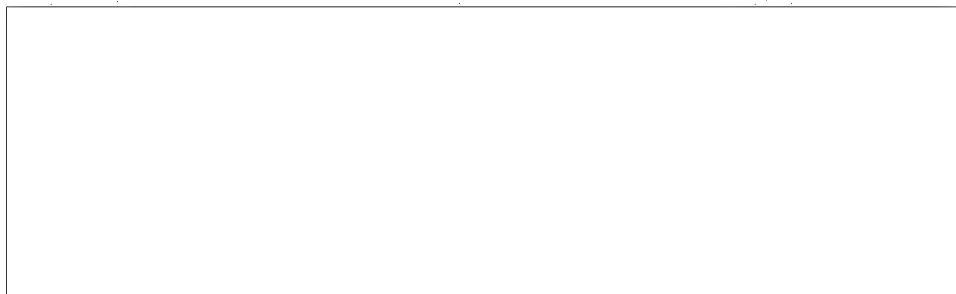
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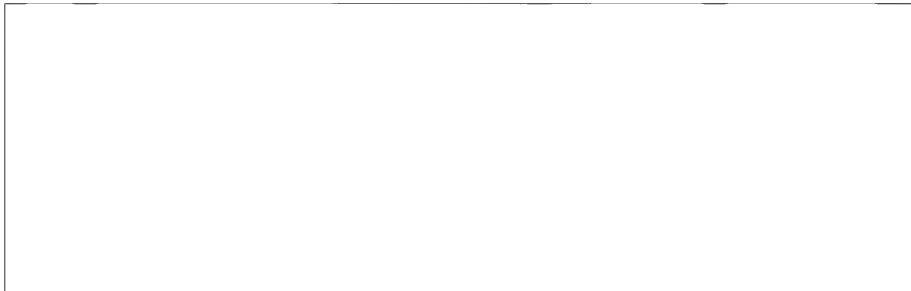


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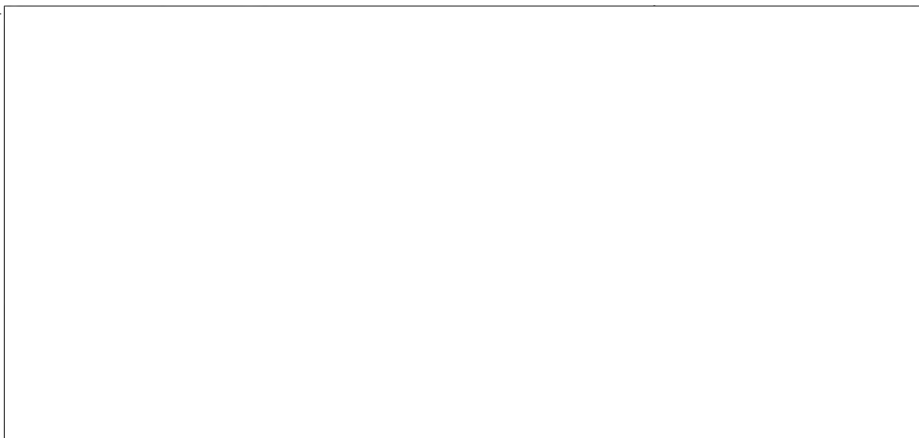
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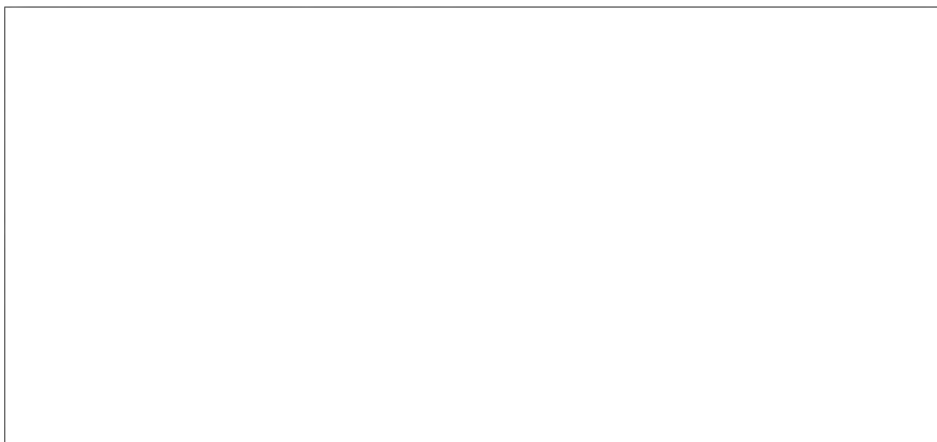
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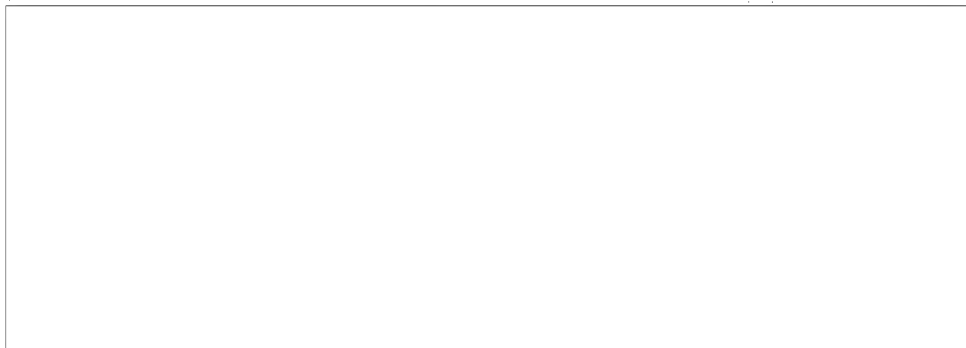
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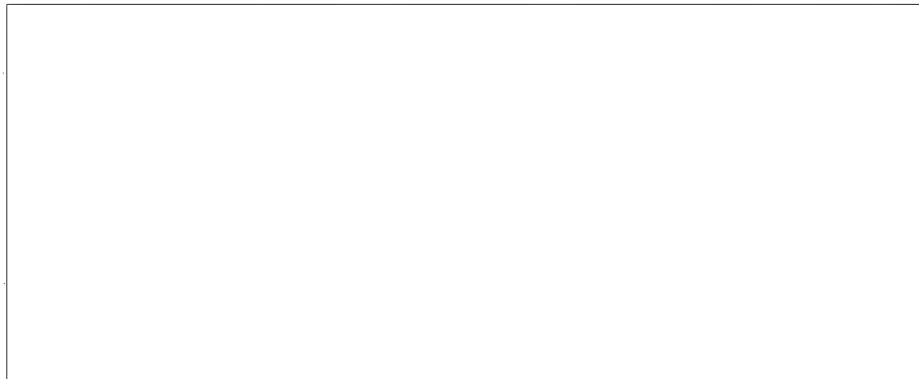
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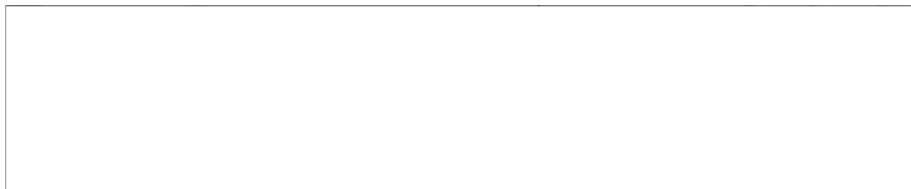
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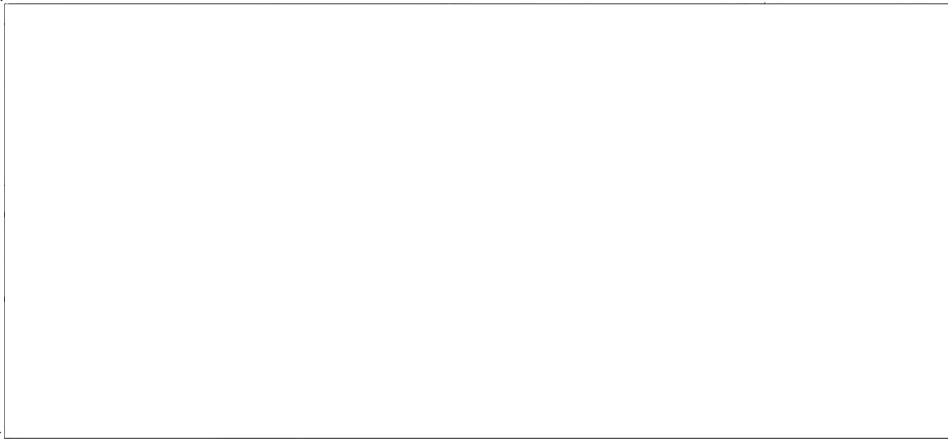
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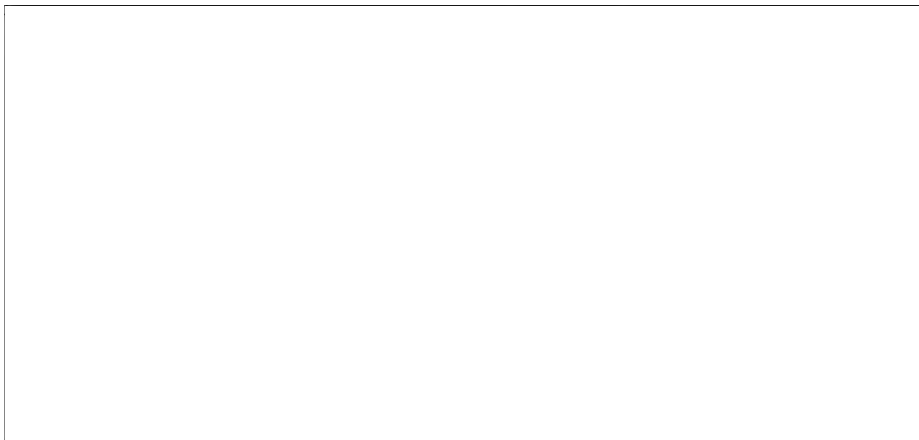
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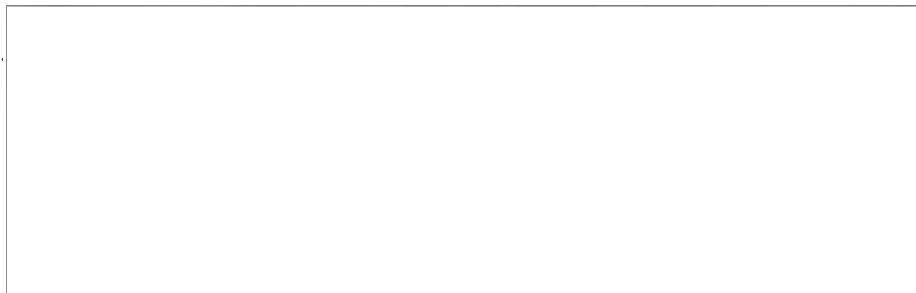


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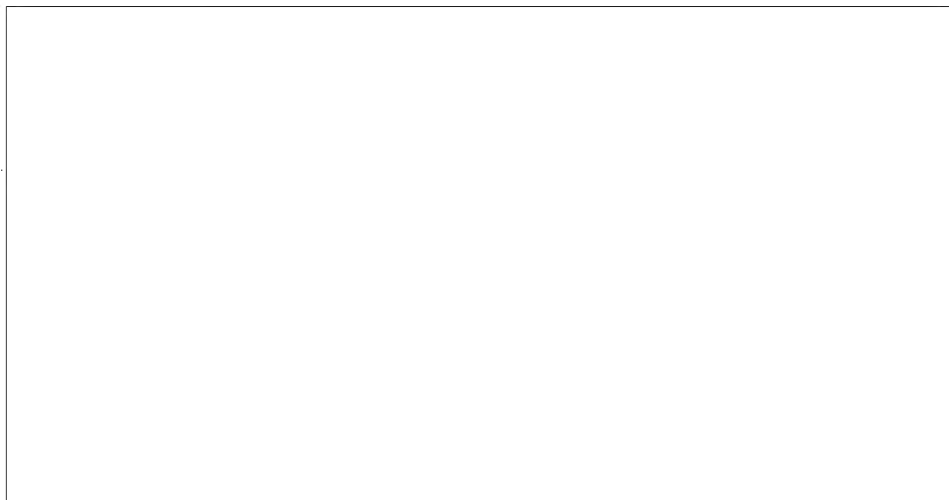
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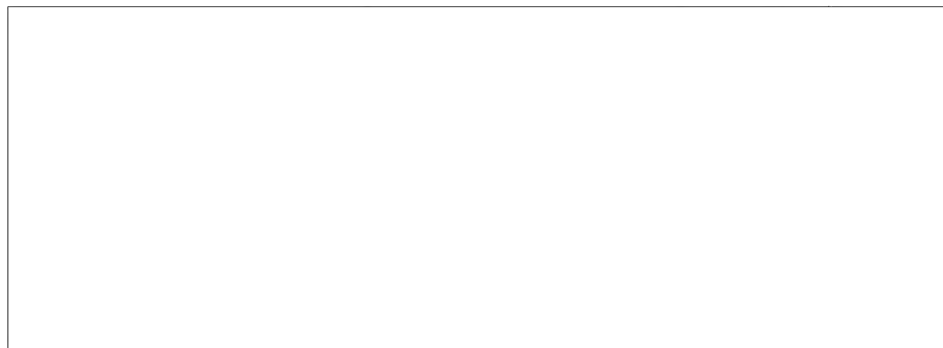
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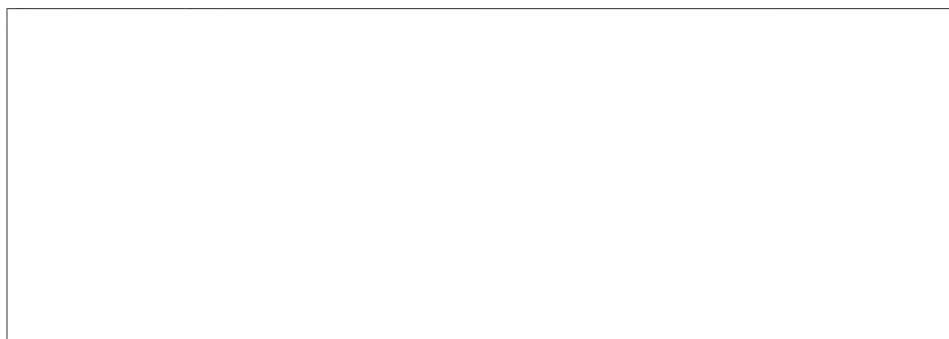
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